

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **MAY 19 1987**

date entered **JUN 18 1987**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic America Street School

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 22 America Street

N.A. not for publication

city, town Providence

N.A. vicinity of

state Rhode Island

code 44

county Providence

code 007

**3. Classification**

**Category**

district

building(s)

structure

site

object

**Ownership**

public

private

both

**Public Acquisition**

in process

being considered

**Status**

occupied

unoccupied

work in progress

**Accessible**

yes: restricted

yes: unrestricted

no

**Present Use**

agriculture

commercial

educational

entertainment

government

industrial

military

museum

park

private residence

religious

scientific

transportation

other: VFW

**4. Owner of Property**

name Rocco Bagalio Veterans Association

street & number 22 America Street

city, town Providence

N.A. vicinity of

state Rhode Island 02903

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City Hall

street & number 25 Dorrance Street

city, town Providence

state Rhode Island 02903

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Providence Citywide Survey

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

city, town Providence

state Rhode Island 02903

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The America Street School is a public primary school commissioned in 1904. The ten room school house is located in the Federal Hill neighborhood on the east side of America Street, several lots south of Atwells Avenue. Like the surrounding houses of the same period, the building is set at the edge of the property line. The school yard consists of a narrow strip of blacktop surrounding the sides and rear of the building.

The school is a simple two-story, red-brick building set on a high brick and limestone basement. It has a flat roof with projecting modillion cornice and a brick parapet. The roughly-rectangular plan building is symmetrical: the central part of the facade is slightly recessed, and the central five bay section on the rear projects ten feet. There is a light, unglazed terra-cotta stringcourse above the second-floor windows.

The main entrance, centered on the facade, is recessed within the center of three, equal-sized arches. A terra-cotta stringcourse abuts the keystone of this arcade and terra-cotta roundels are within the spandrels. Multi-light, half-round fanlights (now concealed behind temporary boarding) are set above pairs of double hung windows in the arches to either side. The identical side entrances on the north and south elevations are framed by squat pilaster strips and capped by a vaguely Ionic entablature. Above the pair of windows over the side entrances, are six-pane lights, each pane with X-shaped mullions. Windows throughout the building are tall, nine-over-nine wood sash.

The construction of the building is metal frame with brick exterior walls and interior metal columns. Automatic sprinklers and a central fire alarm system were added during the mid-twentieth century to improve the safety measures in what is now considered to be a non-fire-resistant building type.

On each floor the interior plan consists of five uniformly sized classrooms, 28'6" x 30', and various teachers' rooms grouped on either side of the corridor. At the front of the building on the first floor there is a classroom at either end. The vestibule is in the center flanked by small matching rooms to the left and right for the teachers and principal respectively. The vestibule opens onto the twelve-foot-wide corridor which runs the length of the building between the stairhalls. In the corridor there are three wardrobes or coat rooms and a water bubbler or sink at each corner.

The remaining three school rooms are located across the back of the building. On the second floor, the plan is the same except for the space above the recessed entry, vestibule and

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teachers' rooms. Here, the space is consolidated into one room that is slightly smaller than the classroom on either side. The only alterations to the original floor plan are the removal of the three wardrobes on the first floor, the construction of a teachers' bathroom on the first floor within the space of one of the wardrobes, and the removal of a small water closet from the teachers' room.

The basement presently contains the boys' and girls' restrooms/toilets, storerooms and the mechanical equipment for the heating and ventilation systems. The architect's plans indicate the basement was to include a boys department and girls department each containing playrooms, showers and drawing rooms as well as the restrooms/toilets.

The original interior detailing and finishes throughout the building are intact with the exception of several classroom chalkboards which have been removed. The eight corner classrooms are identical. There are five equally spaced windows along one wall, and three on the adjacent wall. The windows are set a couple of feet off the floor and extend to the ceiling. Three horizontal bands surround each room. The ceiling molding blends with the top of the window casings to form the top band. A second band is formed by the trim at the top of the chalkboards which extends across the blank wall surfaces and aligns with the meeting rails of the double-hung windows. The third band consists of the chalkboard rail extending past the board, like the top molding, until it reaches a window where it blends with the bottom of the window casing. At the front of each classroom there are recessed shelves with glass doors and drawers beneath. Also located along that wall are two large vents from the original hot-air heating system, a supply closet and a door to the hall. The original white glass lighting fixtures are intact except for a few in the front classrooms on the first floor which have been replaced by suspended neon fixtures.

Outside the corner classrooms in the stair halls there are built-in corner cabinets. These do not appear on the architect's plans but the molding detail suggests that they were either original or early additions. The cabinets have a wood grain finish which closely matches the oak trim and doors to the classrooms and corridors.

The two end stairhalls are well lit, particularly at the second floor level where the windows rise from the landing to the ceiling. There is a metal staircase with iron trim and wood

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handrails. The oak and glass partition between the stairs and central corridor has simple classical detailing. There are double swinging doors with panelling on the lower half and glass above. There are two sidelights at either side with a horizontal division and fixed transom lights above. The translucent glass allows light to enter the central corridor spaces.

In the corridors, two decorative cast-iron Doric columns support each of the two encased metal beams which span the length of the building. In the recesses behind the columns are the three wardrobes; two to one side set in the corners and a larger, single one against the opposite wall. The wardrobes are open, framed spaces with molding detail similar to that in the classrooms. Coathooks line the frame at an appropriate height for children.

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School is still in use as a school. The Regent Avenue School is the only ten room school with a third story auditorium. Approximately thirty percent of the schools from the 1887-1916 period of school house construction included auditorium facilities on the third floor. Most of the buildings with auditoriums were built as grammar schools rather than primary schools.

There was an established need for a primary school in the neighborhood of America Street and Atwells Avenue. Since 1898 classes were held for one hundred and twenty students in a nearby fire station while an additional twenty-five children were being taught in two small rooms on Grove Street. The School Committee passed a resolution on January 29, 1904, to erect a new ten room primary building on America Street. The building was completed in 1905 at a cost of \$57,000.

The interior architectural plan for all public schools was the concern of the Providence School Committee. Since at least the 1870s, the School Committee had been selecting architects for each school through design competitions. In 1890, the School Committee Annual Report noted that the plan for the Peace Street Grammar School was considered so satisfactory that it was to be duplicated on Academy Avenue. Although it never became a common practice to duplicate schools, similarities do exist among some schools built within a few years of each other. This leads to the speculation that an architect might have been commissioned for more than one school based on one set of plans.

Frederick E. Field was selected as the architect for the America Street School. The Masonic Temple, 1897, was perhaps his best known commission at that time. In partnership with Howard Hoppin, Field was responsible for the Samuel W. Bridgham Junior High School, 1919, 1928; and the 1923 Central High School. It is unknown whether any other schools are attributed to him. The strong similarities in design and plan would suggest that the Regent Avenue and Jenkins Street Schools could also have been designed by Field.

Within two years of its construction, the ten room school house was accommodating eleven classes. The smaller room at the front of the building on the second floor intended for special activities was used as a classroom. In addition to the curriculum for the kindergarten through third grade classes, the school program included other special education programs. Through the 1930s there was an upgraded classroom used primarily

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for non-English speaking students until they were prepared to enter a standard grade. Beginning in 1917 there was a special classroom for "backward children". The America Street School was closed in 1955 in order to provide students with more modern facilities and to make the department more cost efficient by eliminating a number of the smaller, older schools. The building was purchased by the Rocco Bagaglio Veterans Association. The Veterans of Foreign Wars association has used the building since that time for its social purposes.

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Annual Report of the School Committee of the City of Providence.  
Providence, 1875-1927.

City of Providence Report of the Executive Committee in Regards to the  
Recommendations Contained in the Report of the Public School Investigation  
Committee. Providence, 1899.

Directory of the Public Schools of the City of Providence.  
Providence, 1890-1927.

Master Plan for Public Schools. City Plan Commission, Providence, 1966.

Master Plan for Public School Sites. City Plan Commission, Providence,  
1950.

Records of the School Committee of the City of Providence. Providence  
1890-1906.

Woodward, William McKenzie and Sanerson, Edward F. Providence, A Citywide  
Survey of Historic Resources. Rhode Island Historical Preservation  
Commission, 1986.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1905 **Builder/Architect** Frederick E. Field

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Designed by Frederick E. Field in 1904, the America Street School exemplifies neighborhood school house architecture at the turn of this century. The ten room primary school is an embodiment of the specifications established by the Providence School Committee in 1887 for neighborhood schools. Few remain from the period, and unlike others that were enlarged and modernized, the America Street School is completely intact and retains its original integrity.

The Providence School Committee set parameters for school house construction in 1887 when it described the model school as not exceeding two stories, with no more than five rooms per floor. The class size should be limited to thirty-five students per teacher, per room. In 1896 the Committee further required that all new structures be built of brick. These standards remained until 1916 when the use of reinforced concrete fire resistant construction was adopted by the School Committee as the new standard of safety and durability.

The building period which the America Street School is representative of extends from 1887 to 1916. Approximately fifty-eight school houses were built during that period. Forty-three of these were built after 1896 when brick construction became the standard. Of the fifteen built between 1887 and 1896, five are known to have been constructed of brick. Therefore, the estimated number of school houses built that meet the construction requirement is forty-eight of which there are twenty still standing.

The schools from this period are similar in plan although their exterior articulation varies. All of the schools built during the period, with the exception of two constructed after 1911, consist of plans ranging in size from four rooms to twelve rooms. The four and six room plans were the most predominant. The America Street School is one of four ten-room primary school houses built.

The three other ten room schools are still standing. They include the Regent Avenue School, 1905; the Jenkins Street School, 1910; and the Branch Avenue School, 1910. Regent and Jenkins are vacant; the condition of the Jenkins Street School is very poor because it is open to the weather. The Branch Avenue



# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet #5

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 17,246 square feet

Quadrangle name Providence

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	9	2	9	8	3	3	0	4	6	3	2	7	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The total property is contained on Plat 28, Lot 798 and does not exceed those boundaries.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia Adams Sheehan, Consultant

organization

date March, 1987

street & number 98 Clarke Street

telephone 401-423-2229

city or town Jamestown

state Rhode Island 02835

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Robert C. Williams*

title

date April, 1987

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

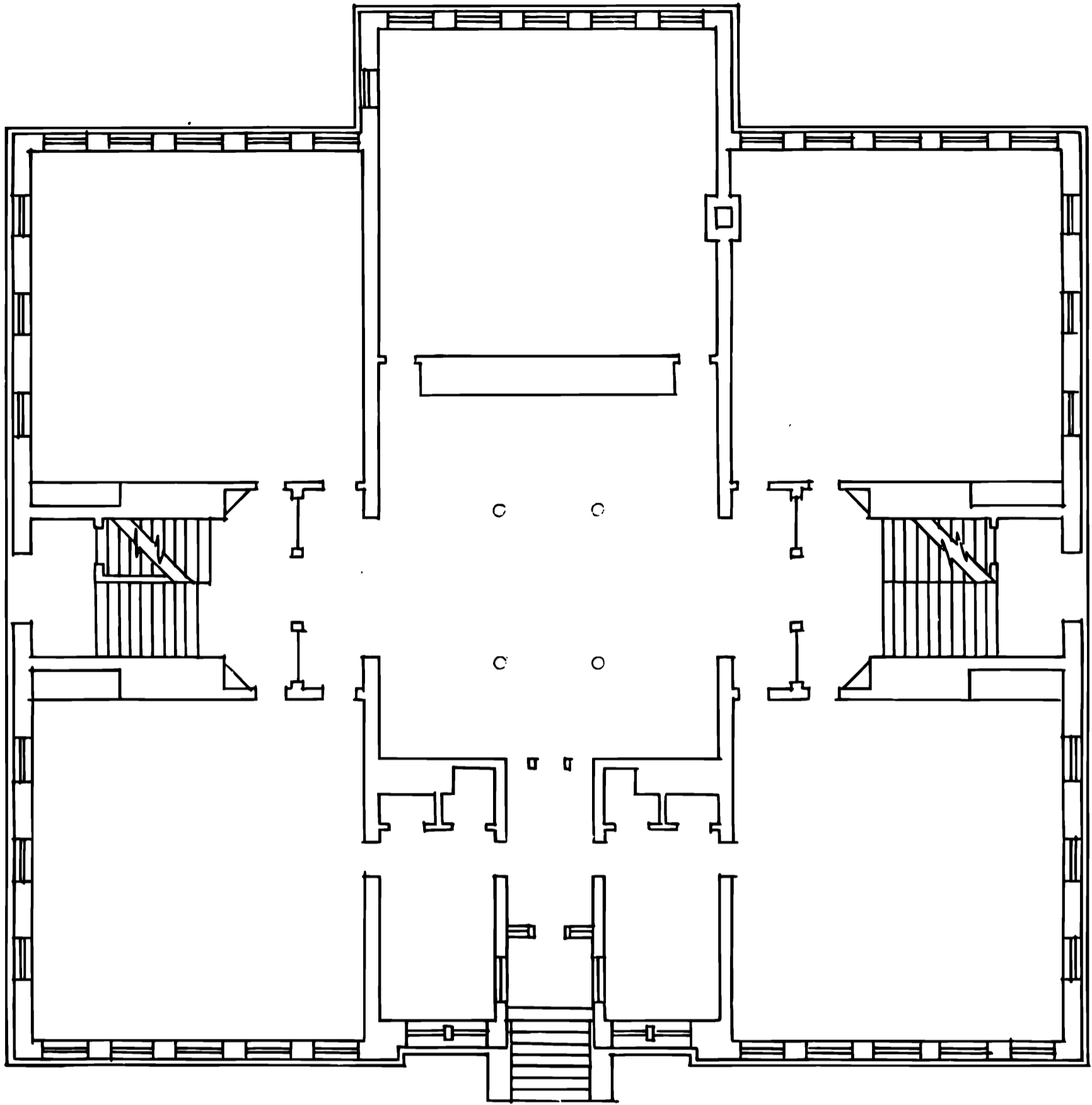
*for* *Alaric Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 6-18-87

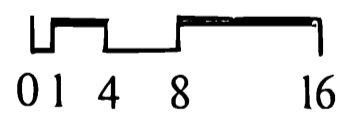
Attest:

date

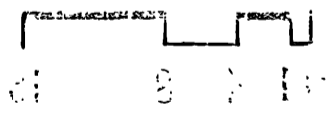
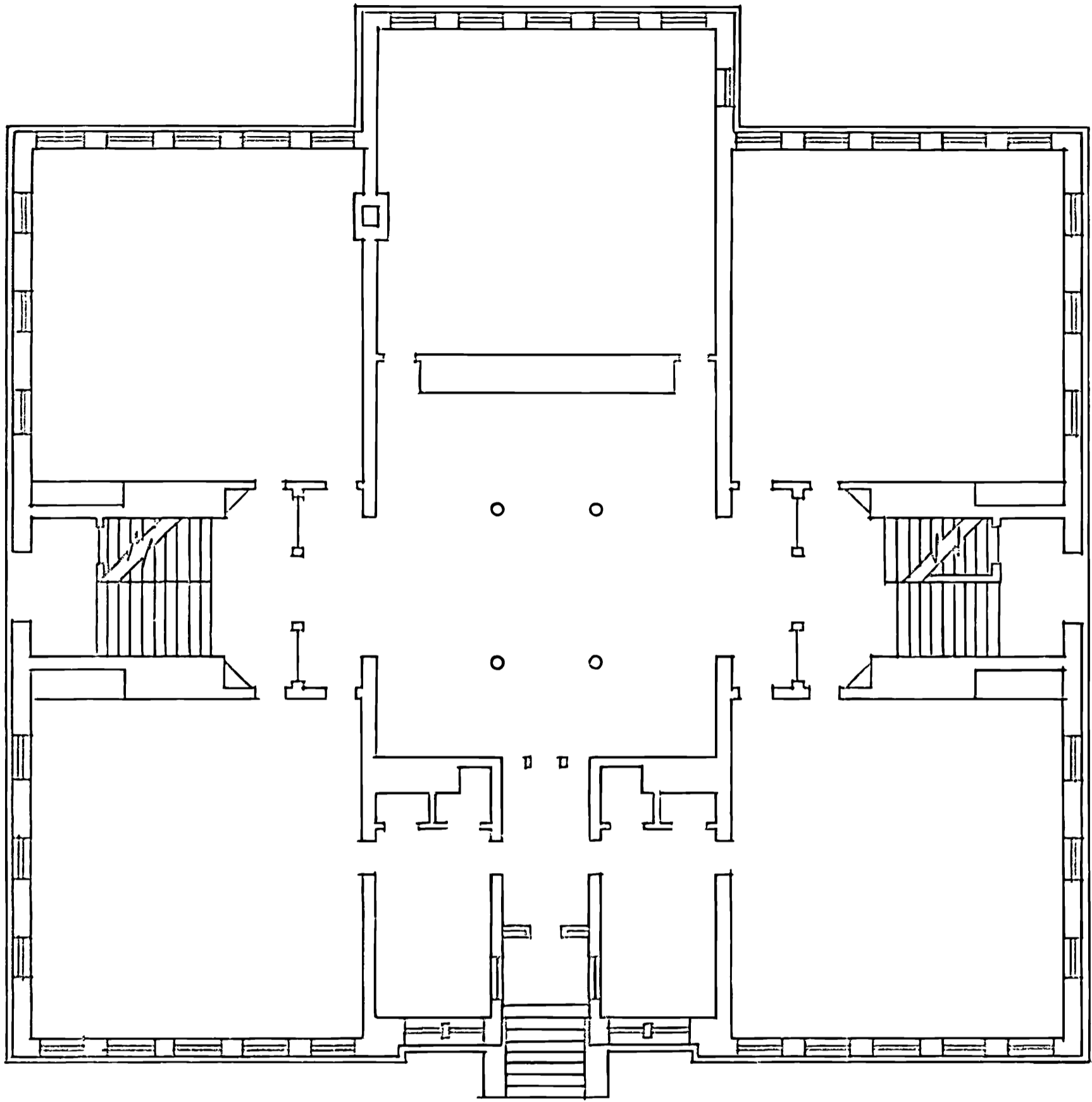
Chief of Registration



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



AMERICA STREET SCHOOL  
AMERICA STREET  
PROVIDENCE, R.I.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN

ARCHITECT  
 1234 5th Ave  
 New York, N.Y.

AMERICA STREET SCHOOL  
22 America Street  
Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Clifford M. Renshaw  
Date: February, 1987  
Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission  
150 Benefit Street  
Providence, RI 02903

View: First floor plan.

Drawing #1

MAY 19 1987